



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



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Tax breaks for GIs

Web Posted: 03/08/2004 12:00 AM CST

Aïssatou Sidimé
Express-News Business Writer

Many members of the U.S. military will find some pleasant new twists in the law as they prepare their taxes for 2003.

Last November, Congress passed the Military Family Tax Relief Act to reduce the tax burden on active-duty military personnel in hot zones. Also, now all reservists can deduct expenses for their monthly weekend duty.

But the biggest change allows military personnel to get refunds of taxes they paid for the sale of a primary residence back to 1997 — if they had to move due to new military orders.

Historically, like anyone else, they had to live in the house at least two of the past five years before the sale to avoid paying taxes on the increased value of the house.

"The problem with the military is that they move around so frequently they don't meet the two-year exclusion period," said Capt. Mary Meek, officer-in-charge of the Fort Sam Houston Tax Assistance Center, which prepares tax returns for active-duty, reserve and retired military for free.

Many, such as Rebecca and Staff Sgt. George Glenny, wound up converting their house near a military post or base to rental property because it was a buyer's market when they needed to sell it.

"There were so many other military people trying to sell that the market's not there, and there's still new subdivision builders selling cheaper," said Rebecca Glenny, regarding the rental home they have had near Fort Campbell, Ky., since George was transferred to Japan in 1998.

The new law makes it viable to sell their Fort Campbell home.

In addition, after talking with IRS officials regarding one case, Meek has found a way to stretch the new law to help even more military homeowners.

One San Antonio military family swapped houses years ago in an IRS 1031 Exchange to avoid paying taxes on the sale of the first home. Under the new law, they can effectively undo the exchange, Meek said. That way, when the family sells the second house, their taxes will be cut almost in half.

It doesn't matter how long the family lived in the property so long as they had to sell due to military orders to relocate at least 50 miles.

"Some will have to amend their returns if they calculated the capital gains so they can get a refund," IRS spokesman Kenneth Vargas said.

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The IRS has suspended the three-year cap on amendments in this case.

Other new tax provisions increased the numbers of personnel who don't have to pay taxes on their military pay.

Traditionally, U.S. armed forces personnel didn't report to the IRS a full month's pay if at any time during that month they were working in one of the combat zones, hazardous duty areas, areas used to support combat zones or were hospitalized due to injuries suffered in a combat zone.

Covered operations included Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the surrounding waterways; the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and nearby seas; and Afghanistan.

The Defense Department also includes staging areas in the exempt zones, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, Jordan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Philippines, Yemen and Djibouti.

Last year, Israel and the eastern section of the Mediterranean Sea were added.

The pay exclusion is capped at the highest enlisted pay plus extras for hostile fire or imminent danger, or about \$5,957.70 a month.

The potential savings are immense given that some of the exclusion zones date to 1991 and that there are about 200,000 military service personnel stationed in combat zones.

"It's relief for service rendered," Vargas said. "It could put thousands of dollars into their pockets."

"Some of these personnel are coming up on a year and all that income is tax-free. It's a benefit of putting your life on the line."

With the reduced taxable income, some officers have qualified for earned income child tax credit for the first time, Meek said.

This year, "designated contingency operations" also were excluded from reporting, which could reduce the amount of taxable income for more San Antonio service personnel.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we're defined as a designated contingency operation because we have troops from here being sent to Haiti," Meek said.

The new law lets reservists deduct all expenses tied to the weekends they attend guard duty without itemizing or meeting a minimum dollar amount. Defense Department death benefits now are fully exempt from taxes, as are dependent care assistance.

However, there are some drawbacks to the new tax laws:

The excluded income could reduce the amount of money that can be deposited into an IRA since IRA deposits can't exceed the amount of taxable income without paying a penalty.

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A mother of four was denied the child tax credit because, after excluding the combat pay for her active-duty husband, the family fell under the income floor required to get the credit, Meek said.

A part-time job could have prevented this.

For more details, go to www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=107467,00.html or request "IRS Publication 3 — Armed Forces Tax Guide."

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AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



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No plea for Arindain at Sheppard 39A hearing

Times Record News

The military court-martial process started Thursday for the man accused in the death of Senior Airman Shelby Orelup.

An Article 39A hearing — which resembles a civilian arraignment — was conducted at Sheppard Air Force Base Thursday afternoon.

Three charges — rape, sodomy and murder — were referred to the court. Staff Sgt. Jason Arindain is ex-

pected to enter a plea at a later date, a Sheppard spokesman said.

The 2nd Air Force Commander, Maj. Gen. John F. Regni, convened the court after reviewing evidence collected during an Article 32 hearing last month.

Arindain's trial is scheduled to start May 11 at Sheppard.

Orelup's body was found along Sheppard Access Road Feb. 28, 2003. She was determined to have been strangled.

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AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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Rodney White
Assistant Editor
Platts Gas Daily

Arizona seeks compromise on Copper Ridge

Arizona state legislators are quietly engaging in delicate talks that could have a profound impact on the future of El Paso's Copper Eagle Gas Storage proposal and Luke Air Force Base, officials told *Gas Daily* this week.

The issue came to the front burner of the state House of Representatives when the new chairman of the House's Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee blocked consideration of a bill that would prohibit any gas storage facility within three miles of an airport or military airport. Luke Air Force Base is situated about a mile from the Copper Eagle site.

Following a meeting with legislators last week, House Speaker Jake Flake instructed legislators to work out a compromise. A spokesman for Flake said earlier this week stakeholders have been meeting and a resolution of the issue is expected soon.

The stakes involved are high. On one side is El Paso's plan to boost the region's gas supplies with a huge storage facility. On the other is the future of a 62-year-old military base that contributes \$1.4 billion annually to the central Arizona economy. In addition to 5,585 active duty and reserve military personnel assigned to the base, it employs 2,250 civilians. The base's population includes more than 80,000 military retirees and 15,000 active-duty military family members.

The Air Force insisted Thursday that it is not engaging in an attack of "not-in-my-back-yard" mentality. The base commander, U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Philip Breedlove, said in a February letter to legislators that his job is "to ensure the safety and security of our Air Force personnel and their families at Luke and to conduct our flying training mission. Anything that has the potential to adversely affect the safety and security of our people or our ability to conduct our flying training mission is of great concern to me."

"Having met with representatives of El Paso Gas, it's my perception that, due to the close proximity of the proposed site, there can be no guarantee that the gas pipeline or its storage facility will not now, nor at some point in the future, adversely impact the safety and security of the people of Luke AFB, or the wing's ability to conduct its national security mission," he said in the letter.

What the general didn't mention in his letter was that the base is under consideration for closure. The spokesman for Flake acknowledged that the proximity of the storage facility could be a factor in whether the base remains open.

Supporting the Air Force in its opposition to the storage facility is the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors and the mayors of several nearby municipalities. While the project's public supporters may be few, the driving force behind El Paso's proposal is the area's strong need for more natural gas and the lack of gas storage facilities in Arizona. According to local distributor

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LUKE AFB, AZ



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Southwest Gas, the region's population is growing at a rate of 5% a year, second only to the growth in the Las Vegas metropolitan area.

The Arizona Corporation Commission has signaled its desire for companies to bring more gas to the area as quickly as possible by offering to be supportive of infrastructure expansion projects. It has even said it would consider pre-approval of cost recovery of utility investments in major projects.

El Paso owns the pipelines that carry virtually all of the state's gas supplies. El Paso Natural Gas bought the equity interests in the Copper Eagle Gas Storage project for an undisclosed price in August 2003. As planned, the facility would store 9.6 Bcf in salt caverns situated thousands of feet beneath the surface. The project also includes a 35-mile-long, 36-inch pipeline that would cut across the base's southern departure corridor.

El Paso is holding a non-binding open season to gauge customer needs for the project. If sufficient commitment exists, the company has said it will ask FERC next month for authorization to build the facility. If all goes as planned, the first cavern would go in service in early 2007.

A spokeswoman for El Paso said the company has been meeting with state and local officials and is working hard to mitigate safety concerns about the project. Company officials are making themselves available to legislators and want to work out an arrangement that is mutually beneficial, she added.

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Sheppard AFB, TX



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Air Force to review more assault programs

HAMPTON, Va. (AP) — The Air Force is examining sexual assault response programs at all 15 of its Air Combat Command installations, including Langley Air Force Base, the command's headquarters.

The review will cover policies and programs at each base, not individual cases, and the findings will be reported to Air Force Leadership. In Texas, investigators will visit Dyess Air Force Base near Abilene.

A sexual assault scandal at the Air Force Academy last year prompted a purge of the academy's commanders and sweeping changes. Air Force Secretary James G. Roche and Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper have directed each major command to assess sexual assault response programs.

The Air Force also is investigating about two dozen reported rapes of military women at Sheppard Air Force Base. A preliminary report found most students at the base said they believe the leadership handles assault allegations effectively and 95 percent of female students said they felt safe there.

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Congressman: WHMC Could be Closed

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Posted By: [Jim Forsyth](#)

Local hospitals and community leaders are gearing up for the possibility that Wilford Hall U.S. Air Force Medical Center could become a casualty of the coming round of base closings.

"I am concerned about our two trauma centers," Congressman Ciro Rodriguez, a member of the House Armed Services Committee told 1200 WOAI news. "Largely because we will have to spend millions of dollars upgrading Wilford Hall."

Rodriguez said military medical facilities will be among those being inspected as the next Base Realignment and Closing Commission examines the country's military facilities. He says Wilford Hall is in far greater danger than Brooke Army Medical Center because BAMC was completed in 1997, while Wilford Hall, Rodriguez says, would require 'millions of dollars' to 'bring up to par.'

Wilford Hall and BAMC currently provide about one third of the total trauma care in Bexar County, according to Leni Kirkman of University Hospital, which provides the other two thirds.

"We would just have to look at our facility and determine what we would have to do to serve the needs of the community," she said, adding that the decision of whether a tax increase would be needed to cover the costs of additional trauma care would be 'up to Bexar County Commissioners.'

Rodriguez says the BRAC could decide to close Wilford Hall without touching Lackland Air Force Base, just as the BRAC in 1995 closed Kelly Air Force Base but ordered the Kelly airstrip turned over to Lackland.

"They expect that this BRAC will be worse than all others combined," Rodriguez warned. "That means it is going to be very severe."

The next BRAC commission will make it's recommendations to the President in 2005.

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AF commanders eye prohibition on booze

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Sig Christenson
Express-News Military Writer

The head of the Air Force's Pacific command has suggested banning alcohol from dorms after a study showed drinking was involved in more than half of all sexual assault cases.

Gen. William Begert left the final decision to the chiefs of the Pacific command's nine bases in the Far East, but said a just-completed study showed alcohol was a factor in 60 percent of rapes reported over a three-year period.

He also said that rape is a serious problem within the command and took a series of steps to reverse the problem.

"Perhaps the most significant study finding is that too many sexual assaults have occurred and continue to occur throughout (the command)," he said late last week. "We owe our airmen, and our airmen owe each other, immediate and decisive action to prevent future sexual assault."

Begert made the comments in a memo released Friday.

It followed a series of actions by the Air Force and Defense Department to clamp down on the problem, and could be a harbinger as the service scrutinizes all its bases in the wake of sexual assaults reported in Iraq, Afghanistan and the United States, including the Air Force Academy and Sheppard AFB in North Texas.

The memo directed commanders to take nine steps to stem rapes, including requiring airmen to attend annual sexual assault briefings.

Legal authorities also will be required to give commanders written reviews of all sexual assault cases.

Begert stopped short of a commandwide "dry dorm" rule, such as one installation already has imposed. But the sexual assault case study, which focused on 92 Air Force Office of Special Investigations cases in the command from 2001 to 2003, revealed that a majority of reported rapes involved young airmen drinking in their dormitories.

The release of the Pacific command's study came just two days after Air Force Secretary James Roche told the San Antonio Express-News that the service's problems mirrored those of colleges and universities.

Roche discussed the Air Force's handling of sexual assault allegations in the wake of an Air Education and Training Command probe into two dozen reported rapes at Sheppard in Wichita Falls. Unlike the rapes studied by the Pacific command, those at Sheppard took place off base, often at hotels.

AETC has expanded that investigation, and the Air Force itself now is examining all of its installations.

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The Pacific command's study discovered 60 percent of suspects, and almost as many of the victims, had consumed alcohol. Drug abuse wasn't a significant factor.

Both the victims and their reported attackers generally were under 25, and four of five knew each other. Nearly half of all rapes occurred in the dorm rooms of victims, suspects or their friends.

Physical evidence and quick reporting of assaults to authorities are crucial factors in making cases, but the study found both lacking on many occasions.

Most of the reported rapes involved "he said, she said" disputes between the victim and suspect, the report stated, with half of the cases having no physical corroboration. One-third of all victims waited more than 72 hours to report attacks.

Col. Steve Lepper, who led the Pacific command's study, said Friday that education will be a key in trying to turn the situation around. To that end, the command will brief airmen on sexual assault awareness when they arrive at their duty stations and then once a year.

An alcohol ban in the command's dorms, where single or unaccompanied junior enlisted personnel must stay, will be left to commanders, Lepper said. So, too, will any decision to segregate dorms, which now have men and women living in separate wings or floors.

But some things, among them a "buddy" system for off-base partyers, in time might become mandatory. One base in Korea already has imposed a "designated thinker" program that requires one of the airmen to remain sober.

"That's my little term," Lepper said. "I think it drives home the point that if you drink, you lose your ability to think sometimes."

The command also is bolstering its Victim and Witness Assistance Program. Liaisons will serve as victim's advocates "from the time of the emergency room examination through trial and beyond," Begert wrote, adding that support should be given even when cases are dropped.

Rape suspects also will get the Air Force's backing. The issue arose after a chief master sergeant accused of committing indecent acts with another male airman committed suicide as his trial began.

"We, having done this study, I think, have a much better understanding now of what were facing here," Lepper said. "When we focus on a problem, we're going to do everything we can to fix it, and that is what we are in the process of doing right now."



AETC Bases News Clips

Vance AFB OK



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VDA report says Vance looking good as closing criteria set

3/4/04

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

Criteria for the 2005 round of base closings has been decided, and Enid is in good shape with regard to Vance Air Force Base, said Mike Cooper, member of Vance Development Authority.

Cooper made the statement Wednesday during a meeting of VDA members.

The top eight criteria have not changed from previous rounds and are areas VDA and city officials have worked toward, Cooper said.

In selecting military installations for closure or realignment, Department of Defense will give priority to military value, which will be the first four considerations.

The final criteria for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission round are:

Current and future mission capabilities and impact on operational readiness of the Department of Defense's total force, including impact on joint war fighting, training and readiness.

Availability and condition of land, facilities and associated airspace (including training areas suitable for maneuver by ground, naval or air forces throughout a diversity of climate and terrain areas and staging areas for the use of the armed forces in homeland defense missions) at both existing and potential receiving locations.

Ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization and future total force requirements at existing and potential receiving locations to support operations and training.

Cost of operations and the manpower implications.

Extent and timing of potential costs and savings, including the number of years, beginning with the date of completion of the closure or realignment, for the savings to exceed the costs.

Economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of military installations.

The ability of existing and potential receiving communities' infrastructure to support forces, missions and personnel.

The environmental impact, including the impact of costs related to potential environmental restoration, waste management, and environmental compliance activities.

Cooper said he was pleased with the criteria, even though members of an Oklahoma base closure committee attempted to move some items higher in consideration but were unsuccessful.

The criteria meet areas VDA and city officials have worked on since the last BRAC round. Every area receiving a red mark in that round has been eliminated, Cooper said, and since the criteria basically is unchanged it could be good for Vance.

Only one project remains unfinished, a new control tower at the base. However, he said, that is not a marked deficiency from the last inspections.

There are no projects in the president's current military budget, but Cooper said there never have been, although many projects have been approved. Cooper credited Oklahoma's congressional delegation for getting projects into the budget and seeing them through the approval process.

Also during Wednesday's meeting, Cooper said he wanted to stress there is no list yet on what bases will be closed.

There have been rumors recently that a list or preliminary closing list was out, and Cooper stressed any such lists

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are merely the author's opinion.

"No official list is out yet. Any rumors of that are just poppycock," he said.

Cooper said after the meeting Vance is the first of the state's military bases to receive a digital upgrade by SBC, the company for which he works.

"As part of the infrastructure and quality-of-life improvements for Vance, SBC made technical improvements to their network," he said.

SBC installed DSL upgrades for Vance as part of its expansion program to Waukomis.

The upgrade will provide high-speed Internet to base housing and anywhere else on base.

The upgrade is part of the SBC effort to make the base fully digital and have high-speed Internet access, Cooper said, but also to further protect communications.

When the project is completed about July 1, the base will have redundancy fiber optic cable from the Enid central office to Vance and back, creating a loop, Cooper said, thus preventing outages of phone service.

"Communications will never be down," he said.

Six months ago, he said, SBC completed a fiber route to Enid, meaning Enid has complete redundancy, which will mean communications will not be disrupted in the event a cable accidentally is cut.

"Now we have a ring to Oklahoma City and back," he said.

With the communications and backup protection, Vance will have facilities that many bases do not, Cooper said.

"We needed that at all five military installations in the state, and this is one of the first projects in the area," he said.

"That sets us apart because many other places don't have it. Forget a single feed, to have redundant feed to a house or business and high-speed capability is good for the base," he said.

In other business, Jon Blankenship, executive director of the Greater Enid Chamber of Commerce, said a group is prepared for a trip to Washington, D.C.

Thirty-two people from Enid will go the trip, including some members of Vance Development Authority and the city commission. The annual trip is sponsored by the chamber.

Also Wednesday, Elaine Johns of Northwest Aero presented a program outlining her petition to become the sole training base for initial pilot training for all Air Force undergraduate pilot trainees. Air Force regulations require all student pilots first obtain their basic pilot's license before going on to train in military planes. Northwest Aero at Enid Woodring Regional Airport is one such site now, and the Air Force wants to consolidate initial training to one place.

Cooper asked if the program would conflict any way with Vance training efforts or airspace, and Johns said it would not. She has spoken to Col. Michael Callan, 71st Flying Training Wing commander, and told the VDA Callan supports her program.